I.F.S.W. Regional Conference

on

Action Programmes of Social Work

Organisations to Meet Present and

Emerging Social Welfare Problems

in Changing Asia

Report of Work Groups
~~DRAFT REPORT~~

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Topic I -- Main challenges in social welfare in changing Asia

    1. The basic framework for the discussion groups was
provided by the position paper presented by Miss Silva from the
Philippines. It drew attention to the demographic, economic and
social trends at work in the region and the impact that they have
had on thought and action in a number of fields, such as health
and nutrition, education, labour, employment and training,
housing and recreation, land reforms, welfare of women, youth
and children.

    2. There seemed to be a hard core of social problems
that were common to most countries in the region; the pattern of
national response to these problems also ran along relatively
"traditional"(?)lines. But many countries also possessed their
own distinctive social problems which could be traced back
to certain special handicaps and each country has attempted
to mobilise its resources to resolve these problems.

    3. For example, Hong Kong has shown energy and
imagination in dealing with an influx of refugees and in finding
them jobs and houses within the severely limited confines
of the island. Viet Nam has had to provide for the social
disorganisation that arises inevitably from a continuing war.
India has built up special programmes for wide segments of
the community that suffer from traditional social handicaps,
the numbers involved running into 95 million people or say

20 % of the total population. Australia has to provide a
network of social services for a widely-scattered population
and makes use of the latest equipment in keeping in touch
with them.

This partial statement is only intended to drive
home the point that it would be futile to attempt any
generalisations for the region as a whole.

4. As problems become more complex and programmes
become more ambitious, it is logical that national programmes
are strengthened and supported by the efforts of international
welfare agencies. If these programmes are to be effective,
then the details of coordination will have to worked out
carefully, the results achieved will have to be evaluated
and the donor countries must be kept informed of what use
has been made of their generosity. It was noted that relief
was not the only end of such programmes and in some countries,
a deliberate effort has been made to build up permanent
community assets by using these relief supplies in "food for
work" projects.

5. The high rate of growth of population was
regarded as the most challenging problem in this region.
Since the pace and standard of welfare services were vitally
dependent on the size of the population to be served, social
workers ought to take part in the formulation of policies

and programmes designed to meet the problem.

All countries in the region------though they may
be at different stages of economic development------are
faced with the problems of rapid urbanisation. It can be
expected that in the coming years, this process will be
accelerated and so it is necessary for social workers to
study these problem areas and help evolve suitable solutions.

6. It seems to be generally accepted that the
social worker can no longer think of providing only a direct
client service in a setting of his choice; in a number of
countries, the role of the social worker has been modified
and expanded. It is only appropriate that he or she is
drawn into the process of change and development and with
their special training and expertise should play an active
part in decision-making.

7. It is the general complaint that social
workers are seldom heard with sympathy by planners and
policy-makers and except in a few countries, they do not
find a seat in these vital discussions. Perhaps, the best
way to get around this situation would be for the social
workers to think in terms of providing certain effective
solutions for knotty problems that remain outstanding.

8. Quite often one hears the complaint that

the land performs programme has made rather disappointing progress. In one such situation, local leaders helped in building up a climate of social opinion against the practice of absentee-landlords and followed this up to the logical conclusion by the voluntary surrender of all land above a certain ceiling.

9. Another instance has been cited where social workers have taken the lead in getting tenants to care for the health and hygiene standards of a housing settlement; in other cases, parents have joined hands in running a school-feeding programme and in a number of note-worthy instances, have helped in raising productivity in industry and agriculture. There are a number of areas where such initiative has been displayed and the credit has been given to the social worker in gathering the basic social data, in organising popular participation and in implementing the individual programme.

10. A short list of the main challenges in social welfare that can be identified in changing Asia would include:

    1. Development of child and youth welfare services, with special reference to the provision of educational and vocational facilities linked with job opportunities;

    2. Community development programmes, with separate programmes for rural and urban communities;

3. Manpower programmes, with particular

attention paid to recruitment, training

and ~~deployment~~; *utilisation,*

4. Family planning, with a special role assigned

within the programme to the social worke r;

5. Programmes intended to cope with the

problems of rapid urbanisation, and

6. Programmes that attempt to understand and

deal with the changing family pattern *including*

Topic II---A critical analysis of current action programmes

in social welfare

1. A country by country review of the current
action programmes in social welfare operating in the region
revealed that the most important common feature was the low
priority attached to social welfare in the development plans.
While part of the reason lay in the limited resources the
Governments could spare, it was felt that there was a basic
lack of conviction on the part of the national planners about
the importance of social welfare in the context of growth
and change. It was also realised that if the contribution
of social welfare to national development was not fully
appreciated by the planners, the social workers and their
professional bodies were also partly responsible. The
traditional preoccupation of social work with ameliorative

measures, absence of proper conceptualisation of the newer
and more positive dimensions of social action, insufficient
or inadequate organised communication between social workers
and the power structure and absence of distinct and demonstrable
results of the professional approach were among the main reasons
for the low priority given to social welfare.

2. Even though social welfare had been included
as a sector in the development plans of most countries, it
did not necessarily imply a planned approach to programming
and implementation. The ad hoc organisation of programmes
to meet whatever happens to be the current emergency still
seemed to characterise social welfare. A stable pattern of
minimum welfare services and a perspective of expansion was
not generally discernible in most countries. Such a pattern
and perspective could undoubtedly provide for emergency
relief and curative services as well. Examples were cited
from various countries to show how the approach ranged from
sporadic to planned effort. Sometimes even within the same
countries, some programmes were carefully planned and others
were not. This was particularly noticeable among the natinal,
provincial and local levels and between different provinces
and local authorities.

3. Another common shortcoming of social welfare
programmes in most countries of the region was that they

were predominantly urban-centred. With the extension of the
programmes of community development to the rural areas,
some headway was being made to introduce social welfare in
the villages but by and large, the efforts were uneven,
grossly insufficient and ~~(———)~~ qualitatively poor.

4. One of the important reasons for the lack of
adequate progress in social welfare was the shortage of
trained social workers, both in overall numbers as well as in
different categories, especially in fields such as rural
and urban community development and advanced services for
groups in need of special care. Most countries were trying
to make good rapidly the shortages of welfare personnel by ac
accelerating and diversifying the training programmes.
However, these efforts were not based on comprehensive and
accurate manpower estimates. It was necessary to urgently
undertake manpower planning in social welfare and then to
relate these estimates to graded and standardised training
programmes accordingly.

5. Lack of coordination was cited by almost all
countries as an important shortcoming of social welfare
programmes. This feature was as much common between governmental
and non-governmental services as it was within themselves.
At the same time, examples were cited of projects and
programmes in which coordination had been effected with a

measure of success. This had happened in instances where the
projects were either local or specific, the autonomy of
each participating agency had not been compromised and where
coordination was attempted not by any external authority, but
rather by representative bodies.

6. It was observed that little or no effort had
been made to settle priorities among the social welfare
programmes themselves. Given the limited resources, such an
ordering of priorities was very essential. Social workers
ought to help in deciding priorities between the handicapped
groups and the underprivileged, between the young and the
old, between the preventive and curative services. Whereever
priorities in sequence were not possible, at least a proper
balance needed to be introduced between various urgent
programmes.

7. One of the crucial impacts of the development
process was being felt on the family. It was felt that in most
social welfare programmes in Asia, there was an awareness of
the weakening of the family structure. However, the services
so far introduced or planned in response fell far short of
the requirements. As a result, one can only list the rising
incidence of broken homes, neglected children, juvenile
delinquency, vagrancy, beggary, crime and prostitution.
A comprehensive family welfare service, need-based and

providing for organised social or public assistance (sometimes through charitable trusts and endowments) coupled with counselling and enabling assistance was generally lacking in the region. Experiments in a few countries have drawn attention to the potential benefits that can be gained by providing such a service.

8. Among the child welfare services, it was noticed that the age group between 1-6 years was mostly neglected in the planning of social services. After the end of the post-natal care and before entry into primary school, children were not exposed to any organised influence from the established social services like health, nutrition, physical care, play and informal education. Wherever pre-school services were established in the form of expensive kindergartens, there was a sharp contrast between them and the average primary schools. Such disparities need to be avoided. In this context, the organisation of day-care centres, creches or day-care with families were found to have relieved the burden on the families where both parents worked outside the home and also made it possible for older children to attend schools with freedom.

9. It was observed that in spite of their numerical and functional importance, most Asian countries lacked a well-defined national youth policy. Youth were

treated either as children or as adults, but never as developing young people. They were also looked upon as a resource to be harnessed to community service. Little or no thought was given to their own needs and problems. The few youth programmes that were in operation did not ~~somehow~~ priority on the under-privileged youth, the rural youth or the young people among the urban poor.

10. In this context, the inadequacies of the educational and training programmes that could prepare youth for life and work in the developing countries was conspicuously noted. It was felt that the social welfare sector had a special responsibility to improve the employability of youth, particularly those who had fallen out of the educational system. Problems of unemployment and under-employment should cause grave concern to social workers and they should accept them as challenges which call for bold and constructive service solutions.

11. The over-emphasis on institutionalisation of social welfare services needed correction. Alternatives through strengthening the family, organisation of (non-residential) community services, foster-care, etc. need to be explored actively. It was noticed that sometimes programmes or services were copied by one country from another without a thought as to whether they had even succeeded in the country of origin or whether they were really suited to the local conditions.

12.   Finally, it was emphasised that the social
work profession had not given sufficient thought to the
wider social challenges that had been thrown up by the
development process. It was vital for the social work
profession to broaden its mental horizons, take a specific
stand on the current social issues, to make itself acceptable
to planners and policy-makers as equal partners in the
enterprise of development and lastly, to improve its own
competence in discharging its growing responsibilities.

Topic III — The Role of Social Work Organizations in Social Action

1.   Social work organisations in some Asian countries
participate in various aspects of social planning and action
through direct participation and involvement with others in:

1. The development of social legislation and
   its passage affecting urban and rural
   populations;

2. The initiation of research and demonstration
   projects as well as continuing research.

3. The holding of seminars and other educational
   programmes for the benefit of practitioners
   and the public toward better services.

4. The establishment of pressure groups for the
   purpose of promoting solutions to some problems
   considered urgent.

5. The development of leadership by encouraging
   and stimulating people to involve themselves
   in cooperative action.

6. The recognition of the professional and
   technical base necessary for sound action.

2. It was generally agreed by all discussion groups
that the sound basis for preparation of the social workers depended
upon a professional education system in a school of social
work with knowledge and experience with related systems and
the social sciences.

It was suggested that continuing education through
a variety of methods was desirable and necessary for the
development of social policy and action.

Groups recommended that schools should periodically
review their curriculums in order to keep pace with current
requirements in the field of practice.

It was noted that education in some Asian nations
was patterned after systems in more developed countries which
did not fit the special needs of developing nations. Where
this occurs social workers are ill equipped for service to
needs of the countries.

3. To be effective as individual practitioners and organisations social workers must be prepared to learn from and associate with representatives of such systems as public health, land reform, government, agriculture, education, physical planning and others. It was not reported that much of this is being done at present,

4. Considerable attention was given to the status of the social work profession and its capacity to affect, change and influence planning based upon its image.

1. Some delegates stated that the basic term "social work" was considered a barrier to the professional image but that alternative classifications were of less value.

2. Others felt it was difficult to prove the importance of social work in their countries.

3. The unification of all social workers in one organisation in nations was suggested as vital to the strengthening of the profession and the improvement of its image. It could then speak with one voice where necessary on programmes of importance.

4. Basic to the above idea is the importance to the individual social worker of his own professional identity.

5. There is the need for a strong International Federation of Social Workers which can help by facilitating communication, setting standards and clarifying goals and objectives in member countries.

Ways need to be found to be more effective and efficient with the interchange of experience, including personal contacts with colleagues in countries and opportunities for visits by officials of the Federation.

6. Basic to the improvement of "image" is the necessity for the establishment of codes of ethics; salary classification and pay plans, and the improvement of working conditions. It was felt that IFSW could help with this.

5. A number of ideas were stressed noting the role of the social work organisation------

1. It should associate itself with the community and its problems.

2. The recruitment of new, young leadership is a requirement for continued activity.

3. The association should be an innovator and not a reactor to the development of social change---It should be a leader and not a follower.

4. It should seek a planning role at all levels where social work concerns are evident.

5. There must be technically competent persons within the association who can convince other planners of the contribution social work can make to diverse social development questions and to convince decision makers that a certain decision is the best one for a particular situation.

6. The general concensus of the discussion groups was that the development of social action depended upon a continuing examination of the educational systems of social work; the strengthening of social work organisations and the rededication of individual members to the profession.

They agreed that social planning and action required a partnership with many groups which must be continually cultivated.